



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

OYSTER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

By Kristina Broussard ~ Scientist II ~ MDMR Shellfish Bureau



Brief Overview:

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resource's Shellfish Bureau developed the Oyster Stewardship Program to better inform and to promote the active involvement of oyster industry members including oyster tongers, dredgers, dealers, and processors. The goal is to encourage harvest practices and other techniques that can be used to assist managers in the judicious utilization of oyster resources of the state. Ideally, the Stewardship program will have harvesters and industry representatives directly involved throughout the development and implementation processes. This will be accomplished by way of meetings, surveys and individual contacts. Innovative methods of improving the resource potential will be investigated and implemented where feasible.



Oyster Stewardship Meetings To-Date

~ October 15, 2008 – 6:00pm - Dealers only meeting
~ Attendance - 12 Total
~ Location - MDMR Bolton Building Room 205, Biloxi, MS
~ Topics discussed – 2008-09 Mississippi Oyster Season, limited entry on distribution of oyster licenses, restoration activities to date and planned, *Vibrio para / Vibrio vul.* information, how changes in requirements may affect harvesters and dealers, experimental harvest limits

~ October 21, 2008 – 5:00pm - Dredgers and Tongers meeting
~ Attendance - 44 Total
~ Location - Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Ocean Springs, MS
~ Topics discussed - 2008-09 Mississippi Oyster Season, restoration activities to date and planned, *Vibrio para / Vibrio vul.* information, how changes in requirements may affect harvesters and dealers, experimental harvest limits

~ January 12, 2009 – 6:00pm - Dealers only meeting
~ Attendance - 11 Total
~ Location - MDMR Bolton Building Room 205, Biloxi, MS
~ Topics discussed - Problems with tags and marking areas, how to get more dealers to come to our stewardship meetings, listing topics that the dealers felt were problems with the program, the dealers were asked to list solutions for the problems previously discussed.

~ January 13, 2009 – 5:00pm - Dredgers and Tongers meeting
~ Attendance - 79 Total
~ Location - West Harrison County Civic Center, Long Beach, MS
~ Topics discussed - Presentation from Robert Ricks with CoCoRaHS (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network), 2008-2009 Mississippi Oyster Season, Review and update problems and solutions for the MS Oyster Industry by Identifying and prioritizing problems and solutions

~ February 11, 2009 – 5:00pm - Sanitation meeting for the entire industry
~ Attendance - 169 Total
~ Location - University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Campus, Advanced Education Building, Long Beach, MS
~ Topics discussed - Presentation by Scott Gordon, Video presentation of *Shellfish Harvesting – The Safe Handling of Shellstock, Overboard Discharge and No-Discharge Zones* developed by the ISSC, Continued Presentation by Scott Gordon on the recent recall of oyster due to Norovirus outbreak in Tennessee.

~ August 27, 2009 - 5:00pm - All Industry meeting
~ Attendance - 186 Total
~ Location - West Harrison County Civic Center, Long Beach, MS
~ Topics discussed - the 2009-10 oyster season, proposed changes to Title 22 Parts 1 and 17, a review of oyster restoration efforts, future plans for the oyster industry and scheduling of the proposed "Day on the Sound."
~ Giveaways - Zip folder , T-shirt, First aid kit, sharpening stone, laminated cards w/ list of important phone numbers

~ September 1 & 2, 2009 – 8:00am - "A Day on the Sound" for all oyster industry members

~ Location - Pass Christian Harbor aboard the MDMR Conservationist, MS
~ Goal - Visit various oyster reef locations and sample and evaluate their current conditions

~ February 25, 2010 – 5:30pm - Limited Entry Seminar
~ Attendance - 109 Total
~ Location - University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Campus, Advanced Education Building, Long Beach, MS
~ Topics discussed - Purpose and Goal of Seminar by Dale Diaz, Office Director, MDMR, Office of Marine Fisheries, Presentation by Walter Keithly, Ph.D. - Department of Agricultural Economics, Louisiana State University, Presentation by Patrick Banks - Biologist Program Manager, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Marine Fisheries Division, Presentation by Lance Robinson - Regional Director, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Coastal Fisheries, Dickinson Marine Laboratory, Question and Answer Session on Shellfish Limited Entry

~ March 29th, 2010 – 3:00pm to 8:00am - Lease holders meeting for all oyster bed lease holders
~ Location - MDMR Bolton Building in Room 205
~ Goal – All oyster lease holders were invited to attend a meeting held by Scott Gordon and Bradley Randall. Bradley Randall gave a presentation on lease requirements by the state and FDA and also an overview of the new *Vibrio vulnificus* management plan effective May 1st 2010.

~ August 31 - September 1 & 2, 2010 – 8:30am - "A Day on the Sound" for all oyster industry members
~ Location - Pass Christian Harbor aboard the MDMR Conservationist, MS
~ Goal - MDMR Shellfish Bureau staff took members of the oyster industry on a tour of the oyster reefs aboard the MDMR's vessel, The Conservationist. The Conservationist pulled a dredge to examine samples of oysters for observation of general abundance of marketable oysters and variability between the reefs. Oyster meat samples were also collected for the seafood safety sampling program.

~ Oyster Task Force
~ The newly created Mississippi Oyster Task Force met for the first time Nov. 24, 2009. The task force was formed to improve the oyster fisheries industry on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and will operate in an advisory capacity to the MDMR. Members of the task force are Leslie Hood, Pass Christian dredger; Harold Strong, Bayou Caddy dredger; George Stores, Tonger; Felix Rodrigue, recreational Tonger; Mike Cure, processor; DMR Office of Fisheries Director Dale Diaz and Shellfish Bureau Director Scott Gordon; DMR Marine Patrol Lt. Donnie Armes; and DMR legal staff, Joe Runnels and Sandy Chestnut. The main goals of the task force are to aid in the collection of pertinent oyster fishery data, provide for an effective management plan, encourage conservation of the resource and its habitat, identify industry issues, and facilitate workable solutions and improve overall value of the oyster.

Marine Sanitation Disposal Give-Away ~ 2009

The MDMR Shellfish Bureau distributed approximately 200 coupons for free marine sanitation devices (MSD) to licensed Mississippi oyster harvesters. The intent of the giveaway was to avoid possible Norovirus outbreaks by providing necessary equipment aboard vessels and by promoting proper sanitary procedures. Each licensed harvester was issued a coupon which could be used in exchange for the MSD at West Marine in Biloxi. The MSD distribution ended December 4, 2009, and was part of the Oyster Stewardship Program. Funding was provided by NOAA Fisheries through the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program.



NEWSLETTER ~ Rebuilding Mississippi's Oyster Reefs ~ Fall 2009

In July of 2009, the MDMR Shellfish Bureau developed the newsletter titled "Rebuilding Mississippi Oyster Reefs". There were 611 newsletters sent by mail to all licensed oyster harvesters, dealers and processors. This newsletter was the second in a series of newsletters developed by the Shellfish bureau with the goal of informing the industry of important information that affects our oyster reefs. Articles included: the 2008-09 recap of oyster season, spring shell culch plant, and new oyster refrigeration standards. The next newsletter will be sent out at the end of 2010.



MS DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
SHELLFISH BUREAU
OYSTER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

**FREE Portable Flushing Toilet
Marine Sanitation Device**
(for a limited time only)

Features a pressurized water tank for powerful, freshwater flushing action at the touch of a button. Holds up to 2.6 gallons of waste and includes a convenient level indicator that shows remaining capacity. Quick-release latch and handle make it easy to disassemble and carry to discharge location.

RULES FOR RECEIVING YOUR FREE MSD:

- Must fill out form completely and return to MDMR Shellfish Bureau.
- Completed form must be received by 11:41 PM on 12/4/09. After 11:41 PM, we will send a coupon by mail for one MSD.
- The coupon will explain where to pick up your MSD—made-to-order MSDs will be distributed—most previous signed coupons are not valid.
- MSDs will only be given to Oyster Harvesters (for shell and not for oyster licenses).
- Only one MSD per MS licensed vessel.
- Availability is limited; coupons will be used on a first come, first serve basis.
- Offer subject to available funding.

Please fill out the following information and return by **DECEMBER 4th, 2009** to the MDMR Shellfish Bureau by fax or mail ONLY:
Fax # 228-374-5220
Attn: MSD Office—MDMR Shellfish Bureau, 1141 Bayview Ave, Biloxi, MS 39510

Please print legibly
Name: _____
MS Oyster Harvester License Number: _____
Vessel ID #: _____
Phone Number: _____
Address (include city and state): _____

If you have any questions, please call 228-374-5000

***Due to limited availability, we ask that harvesters with properly functioning marine sanitation devices on-board their vessel do not participate in this offer.

Rebuilding Mississippi's Oyster Reefs

A publication of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources - Fall 2009

Spring 2009 Shell Culch Plant

As the spring oyster season begins, oyster growers begin to open and clear their oyster reefs. In the process, oyster shells are removed from the reef. These shells are then used to plant oyster reefs. The process involves spreading oyster shells on the reef to create a new oyster reef. This process is essential for the recovery of oyster reefs that have been damaged by storms or other factors.

MDMR Oyster Monitoring Program

The MDMR monitors the condition of oyster reefs through a series of monitoring programs. These programs include oyster reef health surveys, oyster reef condition surveys, and oyster reef monitoring programs. The MDMR uses a variety of methods to monitor oyster reefs, including visual inspections, oyster reef condition surveys, and oyster reef monitoring programs. The MDMR also uses a variety of tools to monitor oyster reefs, including oyster reef condition surveys, oyster reef monitoring programs, and oyster reef health surveys.